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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MNUC, TW

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING REPROCESSING ON TAIWAN

REF: TAIPEI 5907

1. EMBASSY WILL BE RECEIVING IN AUGUST 30 WIRELESS FILE THE TEXTS OF THE AUGUST 29 WASHINGTON POST AND AUGUST 30 NEW YORK TIMES STORIES CONCERNING REPROCESSING ON TAIWAN. PARA 2 BELOW GIVES THE Q'S AND A'S PREPARED ON THESE STORIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN GUIDANCE. THE SPOKESMAN DREW ON THESE IN REPLYING TO QUESTIONS AT NOON BRIEFING ON AUGUST 30. EXCERPTS FROM THE NOON BRIEFING WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE WIRELESS FILE. EMBASSY MAY DRAW UPON THESE Q'S AND A'S IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN THE GUIDANCE, BUT SHOULD REFER OTHER INQUIRIES TO DEPARTMENT.
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Q: THE SUNDAY WASHINGTON POST HAS A STORY ALLEGING THAT THE USG HAS INTELLIGENCE THAT TAIWAN IS SECRETLY REPROCESSING SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL AT AN UNDISCLOSED FACILITY ON TAIWAN. ACCORDING TO TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES, US OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED THIS REPORT. CAN YOU COMMENT ON THIS?

A: THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT COMMENT ON ALLEGED INTELLIGENCE REPORTS. THE ROC IS A PARTY TO THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND HAS REPEATEDLY STATED PUBLICLY THAT IT WILL LIVE UP TO ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS TREATY. IT HAS GIVEN THIS SAME ASSURANCE TO THE US GOVERNMENT. WE FULLY EXPECT IT TO LIVE UP TO THESE COMMITMENTS.

Q: IS TAIWAN CURRENTLY PRODUCING PLUTONIUM THROUGH REPROCESSING OF SPENT FUELS?

A: FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS THE ROC HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTING A SMALL REPROCESSING LABORATORY FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES. THIS LABORATORY HAS BEEN DECLARED TO THE IAEA AND IS COVERED BY IAEA SAFEGUARDS. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS NOT YET OPERATIONAL.

Q: BUT THE WASHINGTON POST STORY ALLEGES THAT REPROCESSING IS BEING ACCOMPLISHED SECRETLY AT OTHER FACILITIES. IS THAT TRUE?

A: AS I NOTED EARLIER, THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT COMMENT ON ALLEGED INTELLIGENCE REPORTS.

Q: THE WASHINGTON POST STORY IMPLIES THAT THE US HAS ADOPTED A RELATIVELY PASSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD ROC NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES. IS THIS TRUE?

A: NOT AT ALL. WE HAVE CLEARLY AND FORCEFULLY CONVEYED OUR VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT TO ROC OFFICIALS AND ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE ROC IS WELL AWARE OF OUR STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND TO THE SPREAD OF NATIONAL REPROCESSING PLANTS.

Q: THE WASHINGTON POST ALLEGES THAT THE US IS HOLDING

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UP APPROVAL OF TWO NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS BECAUSE OF CONCERN ABOUT REPROCESSING. IS THIS TRUE?

A: THE ROC REQUEST FOR POWER PLANT REACTORS NO. 5 AND 6 ARE UNDER REVIEW AND A DECISION IS STILL PENDING. THIS IS CUSTOMARILY A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS.

Q: CAN YOU COMMENT ON THE WASHINGTON POST'S ALLEGATION THAT A ROC SCIENTIST WAS TRAINED IN REPROCESSING TECHNOLOGY AT THE ARGONNE LABORATORY LAST YEAR?

A: WE UNDERSTAND THAT A ROC SCIENTIST DID RESEARCH AT THE ARGONNE LABORATORY ON THE USE OF PLUTONIUM IN THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR PROCESS. THE PROGRAM WAS AUTHORIZED BY ERDA AND IT IS IN A BETTER POSITION TO DEAL WITH DETAILS ON THIS MATTER.

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